1: Cooper E-4 (no date) 1946 SH5 Tehuelche SH5
Poya
Puelche SE 10

T 771 **Religion.**—Of *Poya* religion we are merely told that there was a belief in a superior being called Chahuelli or Chechuelli (Olivares, 1874, pp. 511, 514, 516, 519), who could do good or evil to people. Olivares compares him (and/or it) to the *Araucanian* huecubu (1874, T p. 511).

757 **Curing.**—Bloodletting was medicinally practiced.

PUELCHE CULTURE

Pu 114 The bulk of our information on *Puelche* culture is derived from Sánchez Labrador (1936), Falkner (1774), and D'Orbigny (1835–47, 4:221–223, and esp. 2:266–272). If and how far the description by Ovalle (1888, pp. 178–179) of "*Pampa*" culture refers to the *Puelche* is doubtful. Very frequently Sánchez Labrador and Falkner, especially the latter, give rather detailed cultural data for tribes of the Pampa and vicinity in general, without specifying any particular tribe, *Puelche* or other. D'Orbigny clearly distinguishes between *Puelche* and others, but gives few details on *Puelchean* culture, dismissing, for instance, practically the whole of material and social culture with the statement that *Puelche* culture was in these phases like *Tehuelche* and Argentine *Araucanian*. In the following account we shall confine ourselves to those data that can clearly or with reasonable probability be assigned to the *Puelche* as such—not an easy task, since by D'Orbigny's time and even Sánchez Labrador's and Falkner's time great acculturation with *Araucanian* and *Tehuelche* culture had taken place.

Pu 197 If Lehmann-Nitsche's theory of a fourth Pampean language, the *Het* family, spoken, he believed, by Falkner's *Chechehet* of the southern Buenos Aires Province region, and by some of the *Diuihet*, should turn out to be fully validated, then it would be imperative to draw a distinction between the culture of the *Het* peoples and that of the *Puelche*. Lehmann-Nitsche, for example, considered that gualichu, the name for the evil spirit(s), was of *Het* provenance. At present, however, even though we accept the *Het* hypothesis, there is very little of Pampean culture that can be assigned specifically to the *Chechehet* or *Het*-speaking peoples. In the following summary of *Puelche* culture, only at a point here and there will the possibility be considered that a given cultural trait assigned to the *Puelche* may actually have been *Het* instead. This approach is not all that might be desired, but appears to be the most satisfactory one under present limitations of space and knowledge.

Pu 101 Scattered through the early Chilean sources, such as Rosales and the Proceso Criminal de 1658, are certain sparse data on the culture of the nomadic hunting peoples living at the time in Pampean territory, often called in these sources by the generic geographic name of

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000 met with. Another superstition is that a two-headed guanaco
753 exists in the south, the appearance of which is a forerunner
764 of sickness. According to my informant, after its last appearance measles, or a similar disease, decimated the Southern tribe, the disease having been propagated by communication with Punta Arenas, where it was at that time rife.
776 Any unfamiliar object that they do not comprehend, as, for instance, a compass or a watch, is regarded with suspicion as being tenanted by an evil spirit. Sometimes these objects
[777] are supposed to bring luck at play, and are eagerly sought for. One of my companions was possessed of a watch, obtained in Punta Arenas, and, before playing cards, he would often ask me to set it going, the ticking being regarded as the voice of the hidden Gualichu. My compass was also in constant demand, but the privilege of temporary possession was necessarily restricted to a few favoured friends. I ex-
823 plained, to the best of my power, the use of this instrument, which was comprehended by many of them; and they became very fond of asking me to point out the precise direction of various points known to them, and were greatly delighted at the correctness with which their inquiries were generally
777 satisfied. A locket, worn by me round my neck, was also regarded as a talisman, securing the wearer from death.
757 With all this superstition, regard for omens, and belief in demons, they by no means accord implicit faith and respect to the wizards. Nor do they trust to their spells alone in case of disease; many possess an acquaintance with medicinal herbs, and apply them with good effect. Besides being good farriers, they practise blood-letting, not only on the sick, but, like our grandfathers, at regular seasons have themselves blooded, believing it to be beneficial. Casimiro declared that the superior health of the Tehuelches, compared with that of the colonists or Christians, was attributable to this practice. They also understand and some-
278 times employ poisons, not to envenom their weapons, but for secretly taking off an enemy. Such cases are rare, but

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137 We remained some days in this place, and whilst hunting in the surrounding country (where hares abounded), we observed a new description of spinous shrub with small ovate leaves and yellow flowers, resembling holly, and growing to about two feet in height. Casimiro and myself agreed to try
● 757 whether the leaves might not be medicinal, so a quantity were bruised and boiled: the infusion proved exceedingly bitter, reminding me of quinine, and acted as an admirable sudorific, being administered to the invalids with great success. In
133 one of our excursions we had crossed the hills and descended on a high elevated plain, concluding our hunt near a swelling eminence exactly resembling a huge 'barrow' thickly overgrown with shrubs, from which what appeared to be a salina was espied, to our great delight. Hinchel and myself being alone, and having a fat ostrich to discuss for dinner, determined to enjoy our meal by its shore, first testing the quality of the salt, a luxury which we had long been destitute of. Dismounting, we proceeded to investigate it; but to our great disappointment, after walking over every part of
[135] it, and digging down with knives a foot below the surface, the supposed salt proved to be bitter and nauseous nitrate of soda.
132 After quitting the vicinity of the Cordillera the weather had every day become warmer, and the frosts at night much lighter: indeed whilst in Telek some warm days were experienced, although the winter season was fast approaching.
137 Near this encampment the small edible root previously described as growing in the dried-up lagoons was found in abundance, and was collected by the women and children.
[136] Cavies were plentiful in the hollows and valleys in the neighbouring hills, and even close to the encampment, but the chase of other game proved difficult, the hill sides being so strewn with stones as to render galloping a horse a
777 certainty of laming him. In this neighbourhood Hinchel pointed out a detached pinnacle of rock, much resembling that noticed at Geylum, and according to custom invoked a
135 blessing from the guardian spirit; and then he informed me

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up,—my only alternative to starvation. Famine has no scruples of delicacy; if the reader is disgusted, he is in a state of sympathy with the writer.

Early the next day we (literally) pulled up stakes, and were on the move; and, after journeying all day, encamped in a situation very like the one we left in the morning. The Indians spent their time, as usual, in gambling and in combing each other's hair, with a brush made of stiff dry roots, tied up together. The operator received as a fee the *game* captured in the process. The reader will excuse a more explicit statement of what, though less abominable than cannibalism, is hardly less repulsive.

One evening our family circle were seated round a fire, which sent up volumes of smoke sufficiently dense to suit a savage of the most exacting taste, and which drove me, as usual, to the back part of the hut, where I lay flat on my face. One of the chief's wives was inveighing against me, as was her wont, and a second occasionally joined in the strain, by way of chorus. A third was cracking the bones of a guanaco, that her son Cohanaco might eat the marrow. The fourth and last of the women was attending to a piece of meat for our supper, fixed on a forked stick, in the smoke. Two sons were engaged, as usual, in doing nothing, except occasionally begging a little of the marrow, and scraping their dirty legs with a sheath-knife, by way of diversion; sundry by-plays, and little pieces of mischief, served to fill up the spare minutes. The old chief, who had been silently regarding the scene, now commenced talking, in a low, mumbling, guttural tone, to one of his wives. She was busily eying the toasting-fork, and studying the process of cooking; but, at her husband's instance,

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757 [413] left them and drew from their repository of tools a sharpened nail fixed in a wooden handle, like an awl. The chief stretched himself on the ground, face downwards; a surgical operation was plainly impending. What could the matter be? Had the chief, in the excess of his plumpness, burst open, like ripe fruit, requiring to be sewed up? I drew my head from beneath the protection I had provided against the smoke, and rose on my knees, to get a better view; the huge, black, greasy monster lay extended at his full length, his wife pinched up the skin on his back, pierced it with her awl, and continued the process till a number of perforations were made, from which the blood oozed slowly. I asked the meaning of this operation, and was told by the chief that he had pains in his back, for which this was the best remedy. Blood-letting, it seemed, is no monopoly of the faculty. I told him that in my country we applied, in such cases, a liquid called opodeldoc, an infallible remedy, and promised to procure him some when we got to Holland. This was henceforth added to my list of inducements.

264 The old fellow righted himself, and leaned against one of the pillars of his palace; one of his partners pulled up the toasting-fork, and jerked the half-roasted and more than sufficiently smoked meat upon the ground, seized the knife which the boys had been playing with, and cut the mess into liberal pieces, which were thrown broadcast on either side. The chief's appetite did not appear to be affected either by his indisposition or by the extraordinary remedy applied; his portion of the *cárne* disappeared behind his great white teeth with a haste that seemed to involve no waste.

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Rheumatic affections, they told me, are very common among them; the chief showed me the arm of one of his wives, which was scarred from the wrist to the shoulder by the awl; and the operation was afterwards performed on other members of the family.

Again we took up the line of march, travelling, as near as I could judge, west-north-west, and killing a quantity of game, both guanaco and ostrich. But the hardship of my life, aggravated by a constant flesh diet, and that eaten half raw, and at irregular seasons, — often going two days without food, — had, by this time, brought on a dysentery. This was no more than I had expected; but I knew of no remedy, and had to endure it as I could. We encamped, on the second day, near the banks of the river Gallegos; a fine spring of water issued from the river-bank into a low marshy ground, skirting the margin of the stream. By this time my illness had increased, till I felt unfit to travel further, and began to think that death could not be distant. No change of diet was practicable, and there was nothing to counteract its effect on my system. The pain and weariness of travelling did their part to aggravate the disorder; and mental discouragement — the sickness of hope deferred — completed my prostration. No human being in that desolate land cared for my sufferings, more than they would for those of a dog. Worn out with the constant irritations of a state of existence odious to every sensibility tired and disheartened, but for one thought I could have gladly laid myself down to die, to get at once and forever beyond the reach of my savage tormentors. The thought of home, of wife and child, of friends and country, and all the unutterable emotions that

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cared for nothing but the ticking. The breaking of the crystal was explained, and he was informed that another should be procured as soon as we reached "Holland," — another inducement, I hoped, to speed our passage there.

The inspection disclosed a state of the cuticle which would be thought dreadful in a civilised land. The chief, however, looked as calm as beseemed a surgical examiner, and in a good-natured guttural exchanged a few words with his assistant, who placed himself by my side, and fixing his eyes steadily upon me, began swinging his hands and howling like a wild beast. The comparison was not far out of the way, for he gave a sudden spring, fastened his teeth on my neck, and commenced sucking the blood, growling all the while like a tiger! For a moment I thought my hour had come. I weaned the rascal as soon as possible, not knowing what his taste for blood might come to, if too freely indulged. It seemed like a refinement upon cannibalism, but was, in fact, as I soon ascertained, the regular treatment made and provided by Patagonian science for the relief of severe cutaneous affections.

The chief, all this while, recurred with undiminished pleasure to the ticking of his new toy. When his curiosity had at length abated, he returned it to me. I wrapped it carefully in a rag, and enveloped it afterwards in a young colt's skin provided for its reception, when, by direction of its present august proprietor, it was suspended among other valuables from one of the stakes of the hut, near the spot where his highness customarily reposed. It was not, however, allowed long to remain quiet. I was ordered to take it down and hold it to the ears of all the visitors to the lodge. Forty times a day it had to come down for this

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Nothing of importance occured at our encampment near the lakes, except — what was a very noteworthy fact with me — such an abundance of ostrich that I was surfeited with the delicious fare, and was compelled by the chief to take a horse-rein emetic, — a more precise description of which the reader will have no difficulty in excusing. Had I not so completely disavowed the medical character, the chief might probably have allowed me to feel my own pulse, — if I could find it, — and to prescribe for myself; but the renunciation of professional honors brought me under the sanitary, as well as the political, jurisdiction of Parosilver.

Our line of march was now in a northerly direction, soon deflecting to the eastward, — a movement that revived my sinking hopes. There seemed to be some prospect of striking the Atlantic coast, and coming within reach of civilized men. On our way we observed the tracks of some animals different from any I had met with. The chief said it was the *limerer*, with which lucid definition I was fain to be content; and, as no specimens were visible, the inquisitive naturalist must trust to his imagination for the rest.